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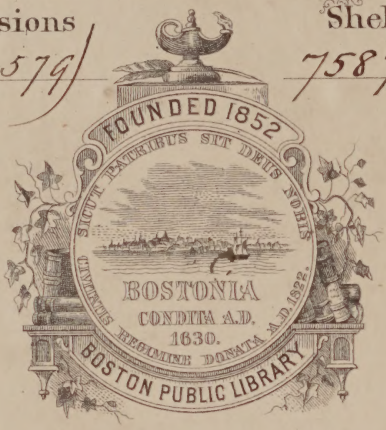

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ADDRESS,

BEFORE THE

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE CONVENTION,

BY

CHARLES E. ENDICOTT,

AT

EAST BOSTON, OCT. 29, 1885.

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SEP 20 1890

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

Madame President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

"O woman! lovely woman! nature made thee
To temper man; we had been brutes without you."

"The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command."

Some years ago that august and pedantic body, the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard University, invited the immortal PHILLIPS to address them, and they unaccountably expected he would say nothing but that which was strictly complimentary; or at least not derogatory to them; but after he had finished; a general complaint was made that he had abused their hospitality. I intend this evening to follow somewhat Mr. PHILLIPS' line of argument, and trust, in view of the truth contained in the statements I propose to make, that I shall be pardoned for offering them.

Women must attain to a higher standard of moral independence, before any material advancement can be made towards their possession of the ballot. The opposition to women's suffrage arises from two causes; firstly, the natural desire of monopoly on the part of those who possess it,—the men—and the suspicion that universal suffrage is a mistake, of which there is a superficial evidence in its being freely given to all males of the *genus homo* of a certain age, without regard

to their intelligence, or capacity for realizing the responsibility attending the possession and exercise of a voice in the government. The present educational test is as absurd as it is useless, and is a perfect travesty on popular government. All other arguments against female suffrage are *prima facie* unfounded in fact, and sophistical, except those just mentioned, and these are only natural, and quite inconsistent with the inevitable law of evolution. Conservatism is the fundamental cause of the ostensible objections to woman suffrage, and I see in it a strict analogy to the accepted idea in regard to the absence of the inventive faculty among the Chinese, an opinion which is in diametrical opposition to the actual fact. The Chinese are firmly anchored to the past, and to do anything contrary to precedent would be regarded as the rankest heresy. If a Chinaman dared to invent any new thing, his invention would not only be unappreciated, but the inventor would be both socially and politically ostracised; consequently, there being no incentive in China for invention, but, on the contrary, everything conspires to repress it, the faculty is compelled to lie dormant and unexercised, although it undoubtedly exists.

Now this same ignorant and prejudiced conservatism prevails in this country in regard to the political capacity of women. Consequently the idea obtains that women are innately incapable of understanding the sciences and duties of government, political economy and finance. If one instances the capacities and actions of Isabella of Spain, Katherine of Russia, Marie Theresa of Austria, Elizabeth of England, Harriet Martineau, Marian Evans, Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone, Mary A. Livermore,

and many other women, as contrary proofs to the current estimation in which the female intellect is held, the opposition assert that these women were abnormal exceptions, upon which it is illogical to generalize. Now the real fact is that these women were not exceptions, but were true illustrations of the innate intellectual capacity of their sex, when it has been either removed, or has removed itself beyond the restriction of popular prejudice. In this connection I would mention that I read some time ago an editorial in a New York financial journal, stating that it would be fortunate if some Miss Martineau could be found to elucidate the intricacies of our financial system to the popular mind.

I have arrived now at the most important part of my theme; and this is the responsibility of women for their political inequality with men, and I state deliberately that the "undeveloped majority" of women, themselves, are principally to blame for this insignificance. The natural disinclination of a woman to do anything that will militate against her prospects for marriage, and thereby deprive herself of receiving pecuniary support from a man, causes her to renounce her independence. How often one observes a strong intellectually-organized young woman quite willing to appear like a fool, in order to enhance her chances of matrimony with a comparatively weak-minded man, who she believes has the pecuniary power to administer to her yearning for luxuries and ostentatious vanity; thereby "bartering her birthright for a mess of pottage." I have often listened to intelligent women discussing the intricate combination of some crochet stitch, or some elaborate trimming for a dress, and whether the gar-

ment should be cut "bias, or with a gore," with all the earnestness and apparent exercise of brain power that would be required to solve a problem of political economy, finance or mechanics, or to calculate an eclipse. Sidney Smith, in commenting on women's occupations, said:

"Women have nothing serious to do; is that a reason why they should be brought up to do nothing but what is trifling? They are exposed to greater dangers; is that a reason why their faculties are to be purposely and industriously weakened? They are to form the characters of future men; is that a reason why their own characters are to be broken and frittered down as they now are?"

While women are content "to suckle fools and chronicle small beer," the men will continue to be "the lords of the creation." The frivolous occupations of women emanate from their sex being excluded by popular prejudice from availing themselves of the rights which they have already attained; and none but those who are highly organized, dare encounter the *quasi* ostracism attending a departure from the accepted conservatism concerning the recognized duties and proprieties of their arbitrarily circumscribed sphere.

The duty of the hour for woman is to devote the time now spent in gossiping, reading trashy novels, and manufacturing gew-gaws to make herself ridiculous, straining after social position and society prestige, to the study and discussion of economic questions, the laws of hygiene, and all that relates to the organization of the Cosmos, and consider that everything appertaining to the æsthetic part of life is merely subsidiary to these more important duties. Here I would again quote Sidney Smith:

"If women knew more men must learn more, for ignorance would then be shameful, and it would become the fashion to be instructed. The instruction of women improves the stock of national

talents, and employs more minds for the instruction of the world; it increases the pleasures of society by multiplying the topics upon which the two sexes take a common interest, and makes marriage an intercourse of understanding as well as of affection, by giving dignity and importance to the female character. The education of women favors public morals; provides for every season of life, as well as for the brightest and the best; and leaves a woman, when she is strickened by the hand of time, not as she now is, destitute of everything, neglected by all; but with the full power and the splendid attractions of knowledge—diffusing the elegant pleasure of polite literature, and receiving the just homage of learned and accomplished men."

I have the pleasure of being acquainted with a lady, who, although several years past eighty, is a perfect illustration of that "full power and splendid attractions &c.," of which this reverend gentleman has written..

Even those women who are compelled to perform the most prosaic and domestic labor, always find time to waste on some useless employment, which they are pleased to call rest, recreation or diversion, but which is, in reality, more exhaustive than the hardest toil. Until women are able to emancipate themselves from the well-grounded charge of vanity, they can never enfranchise themselves into a political equality with men. Women must realize their possible independence before they can hope to exercise the right of suffrage intelligently, as men need to be more honest before they can vote wisely.

I take issue with my esteemed friend, John Boyle O'Reilly, who has said women will be brutalized by becoming the *political* peers of men: as history has proved that their existing *social* equality has inured not only to their own radical higher ethical and mental elevation, but also to that of *men;* and an analogous result would occur through political equality. When women exercise the franchise, politics will be taken out

of the "slough of despond" in which they exist at present, and be elevated to the ethical plane of statesmanship. This idea I know is not in conformity with the thought of the "undeveloped majority" of the nineteenth century, but will be quite in accordance with both the general thought and action of the twentieth. Even at present women are an immense "power behind the throne." "Uncle Tom's Cabin" did quite as much as the union army towards emancipating the slave, as Mrs. Stowe made the union army possible. When women hold the ballot, our primary meetings, conventions, caucuses and elections, will be conducted with the same respectability and decorum as exist at present in our churches, Sunday schools, lectures and concerts.

An intelligent Chinese, a graduate of Yale College, in speaking to me once of the matter of woman's suffrage, said that the hesitation to give women a voice in the government, appeared to him "to be straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel." "They already control popular opinion in a great degree, through the medium of the pen, they have entrée to all the professions, and have a superior social influence to men; nevertheless, after having been admitted into perfect social, professional, and literary equality with men, a dread is entertained of that little gnat,— political equality." There never can be an advance in the condition of manhood, prior to an improvement in the *status* of motherhood.

In this connection it is well to mention that although the children and posterity of moral and intellectual men, seldom inherit the ethical superiority and mental

capacity of the paternal stock, the maternal excellence in those directions is transmitted frequently to some individual descendant, either in the immediate, or in some succeeding generation. It appears to be an accepted fact that all highly intellectually endowed men have been the sons or grandsons of superior organized and highly-toned women.

As the sphere of woman is so arbitrarily circumscribed, as compared with that of man, the public are rarely acquainted with the maternal ancestry of exceptionally superior men and women, and consequently when psychological subjects are discussed, illustrations are drawn, necessarily, from the masculine portion of society. A deep philosophical rebuke to those who deny woman psychological influence and capacity, was administered by George Eliot, when she made Mrs. Poyser say "Yes, women are fools; the Almighty made them so as to match men."

I think when pre-natal influences are better understood, it will be conceded that psychological and ethical characteristics emanate chiefly from the maternal element of mankind.

Every means should be adopted to educate the "undeveloped majority," who eventually lead the "unsound majority" in regard to the benefit to be derived by the entire body politic from women's possession of the franchise. The following method might tend to demonstrate that women are competent, not only to conduct public affairs, but to manage them on a much higher ethical plane than men are capable of doing alone. Let women hold annually primary meetings for the nomination of delegates to conventions, to be held at

certain towns in the State, for the purpose of nominating State officers for the ensuing year, and adopt a platform of principles. After this, caucuses should be held in the interests of the several sets of candidates during the campaign, which should terminate with a general election; and although the votes would have no legal value, they would be of great moral importance in demonstrating the will of half the people of the Commonwealth, or at least of as many as were inclined to make their voices heard. Women would then be able to show in what manner they could conduct political affairs in the matter of elections, which would doubtless have an educational effect upon the people of the entire Commonwealth, and undoubtedly would remove the prevailing idea concerning the injurious results apprehended from women's political equality with men. Such a method would have great influence in advancing the cause of woman's suffrage and hasten its consummation; as the proposed system would demonstrate practically some of the ideas that are continually advanced theoretically at their conventions, relative to women's political capacity; and be of much more service.

It is stated by some persons, who are actually opposed to women's suffrage, that they do not object to their voting, whenever any large number of women desire to do so; but as they generally do not care to possess it, it is needless to force the franchise upon them, as they would not avail themselves of it. The reply to this is that it is illogical to state because they do not ask to vote, it is evident that women do not wish a voice in the Government; as popular prejudice

prevents the free expression of their opinions on the subject. If women generally do not wish to exercise their right to the franchise: this is no more a reason that the right should be withheld from them, than it would be if children generally do not wish to learn, they should not have the privilege of attending school. To concede the suffrage to women would not *compel* them to vote or to interest themselves in public affairs, and, in the event of their having it, there would not be any greater portion of them actively engaged in politics than now exists with men, which is infinitesimal, aside from the mere action of casting votes. This controverts the specious assertion of the opposition that, in case women had the franchise, they would inevitably neglect their maternal and domestic duties. How many men neglect their marital and business duties for politics? Not one in ten thousand.

In conclusion I would state that I believe implicitly that women will eventually obtain the ballot; but the time for this accomplishment will be retarded in proportion as they are inactive in availing themselves of the limited suffrage to which they are now entitled, and are content when possible, to depend on men for support. Or, as an able writer has stated it, "It is probable that women are denied the vote because the greater part of them are in a dependent condition." When I say dependent, I do not allude to the wives, daughters and sisters who render a *quid pro quo* for all they receive from their husbands, fathers and brothers in those domestic services and attentions that make "life worth living"; but I refer to those who value their male relatives only in proportion as they gratu-

itously provide the means for promoting their idleness and vanity, and for which they make no return. The former class of women ought not to be placed in the category of dependents, and they should assert their right to the ballot by every possible means.

N. B. — Some additions have been made in the foregoing to the original address.

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